

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site
Tuskegee, Alabama

Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site

Rehabilitation of Moton Field

Development Concept Plan / Environmental Assessment

January 2005



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DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

TUSKEGEE AIRMEN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Tuskegee, Alabama

The National Park Service (NPS) uses a development concept plan (DCP) to bridge the gap between a general management plan (GMP) and the preliminary construction and design plans for a specific geographic area within NPS boundaries. This is accomplished by providing greater detailed direction on options for development at a particular geographic area. The purpose of the proposed federal action described in this Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment (DCP/EA) is to restore the cultural landscape of the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site (TUIA) to its period of significance (1941 to 1945) with focus on the Historic Core Area (HCA) of the site. In this case, a General Management Plan will be prepared following this DCP/EA. The GMP will present broader strategies for preserving the natural and cultural values that make TUIA significant.

Public Law 105-355, termed the “enabling legislation,” established the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site at Moton Field on November 6, 1998, to commemorate and interpret the heroic actions of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. The Tuskegee Airmen are African Americans who completed Air Corps training and were commissioned as pilots and officers during World War II. Moton Field was the primary flight training facility for these pilots. Moton Field historically comprised approximately 780 acres. NPS now owns approximately 44 acres of Moton Field, with an additional 46 acres to be acquired in the future as provided in the enabling legislation [Section 303(b)(2)]. The 90-acre site is the subject of this study and is referred to as TUIA.

The historic buildings at Moton Field were constructed between 1941 and 1945, and were either abandoned or put to other uses when the pilot training program was terminated after World War II. Of the 15 original structures, nine still exist today. NPS conducted a *Special Resource Study* in 1998 that made recommendations for preservation, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of Moton Field. Public Law 105-355 subsequently described the roles of NPS and its partners, Tuskegee University and the Tuskegee Airmen, in the development of TUIA. The enabling legislation provided information on the management, development, and operation of TUIA, and mandated specifically that Alternatives C and D, as described in the *Special Resource Study*, be implemented.

This EA addresses development of TUIA in accordance with Alternative C, which serves the purpose of preserving where possible and rehabilitating TUIA. Potential environmental impacts of the preferred alternative (Alternative C), as well as the no-action alternative, are considered in the EA, and based on site-specific conditions certain topics were either retained for detailed analysis or eliminated from further consideration. The no-action alternative was considered as a baseline for comparison against other alternatives, and does not include rehabilitation or preservation of the Moton Field site at TUIA. Under the no-action alternative, the site would remain in its current use as an NPS unit and no further development would occur.

The preferred alternative is designed to promote for park visitors a strong “stepping back into time” experience to the war years with a focus on the flight training experience. The HCA would be rehabilitated to reflect the site’s appearance during the period of significance, and a Visitor Services Area would be created to provide services compatible with the projected visitor load and composition. Improvements to the HCA would include rehabilitation or restoration of the nine existing structures, reconstruction of Hangar Number Two, construction of four ghost structures, and one structure would be interpreted with exhibits, as there is not enough historic information to create a ghost structure. Other improvements to the HCA include restoration of historic walkways, driveways, taxiways, and landscaping.

Overall, there would be no impairment to park resources from the preferred alternative. Although the preferred alternative would result in minor impacts to vegetation and wildlife, restoration and rehabilitation of TUIA’s historic structures would provide socioeconomic and cultural benefits to the Tuskegee region and would provide a tourist attraction for everyone interested in the Tuskegee Airmen’s significant role in World War II history.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Tuskegee Airmen are African Americans who completed Air Corps training and were commissioned as pilots and officers during World War II. The primary flight training facility for these pilots was located at a site in Tuskegee, Alabama known as Moton Field, which historically comprised approximately 780 acres. The military accomplishments of the Tuskegee Airmen, as well as their initial training at Moton Field, are nationally significant since this was the first time the United States Army recruited African Americans into the Army Air Corps (NPS 1998).

The historic buildings at Moton Field were constructed between 1941 and 1945, and were either abandoned or put to other uses when the pilot training program was terminated after World War II. Of the 15 original structures, nine still exist today. One of the two hangars and the interior of the Control Tower were destroyed in a fire in 1989. In 1998, the National Park Service (NPS) conducted a *Special Resource Study* of Moton Field that made recommendations for preservation, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of the 15 historic structures. On November 6, 1998, Public Law 105-355, termed the “enabling legislation,” established the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site (TUI) as a unit of the NPS. The enabling legislation describes the roles of NPS and its partners, Tuskegee University and the Tuskegee Airmen, in the development of TUI [see Public Law 105-355, § 303(d)]. NPS now owns approximately 44 acres of Moton Field, with an additional 46 acres to be acquired in the future as provided in the enabling legislation [see Public Law 105-355, § 303(b)(2)]. The 90-acre site is the subject of this study and is referred to as TUI. The legislation also describes the purposes for the site:

- To inspire present and future generations to strive for excellence by understanding and appreciating the heroic legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen.
- To commemorate and interpret the impact of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II, including their training at Moton Field and other sites, the African-American struggle for greater participation in the United States Armed Forces, and the impacts of the Tuskegee Airmen on civil rights advances, beginning with their success in leading the desegregation of the United States Armed forces shortly after the second World War.
- To recognize the strategic role of Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) in training the airmen and commemorating them at this historic site.

The enabling legislation for TUIAI provides detailed information on how the unit will be managed, developed, and operated. Mandates to implement Alternatives C and D as described in the *Special Resource Study* [NPS 1998; see Public Law 105-355, § 303(d)(4)] were included in the legislation. Initially, Alternative C will serve to guide development. Alternative D will follow after an agreement is reached with Tuskegee University on the development of the Tuskegee Airmen National Center (TANC). This environmental assessment addresses development in accordance with Alternative C and does not address provisions for Alternative D, which will be addressed in a later document.

- *Alternative C – Living History Tuskegee Airmen* “envisions a unit of the National Park [Service] system with a rehabilitated cultural landscape including the historic complex and broad historic setting” (NPS 1998). Alternative C is designed to promote a strong “stepping back into time” experience including a focus on the flight training experience. To achieve this, Alternative C includes several broad categories of action.

In 2002, a *Features Inventory*, a *Cultural Landscape Report*, and a *Historic Structures Report* (Pond & Company 2002a, 2002b) were completed. In 2003, NPS contracted with Hartrampf, Inc. to provide conceptual design options for the preservation and rehabilitation of the historic buildings and grounds and development alternatives for TUIAI. These designs were based on Alternative C of the *Special Resource Study* (NPS 1998), the enabling legislation, and coordination with NPS personnel and interested parties, Tuskegee University, and the Tuskegee Airmen. The *Value Analysis Study* (Hartrampf 2004a) of the *Title I Conceptual Design* (Hartrampf 2003) presented the Preferred Alternative and the *100 Percent Design Analysis* (Hartrampf 2004b) further refined the Preferred Alternative.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of TUIAI is to commemorate the valuable contribution of the Tuskegee Airmen to the World War II effort. This purpose includes memorializing initial training at Moton Field by preserving and rehabilitating the Historic Core Area (HCA) of Moton Field and its broad historic setting. The proposed action is to develop buildings and grounds to reflect the appearance of the site during the period of significance (1941 to 1945) focusing on the year 1945. Additionally, visitor services compatible with the projected visitor load and composition are included in the proposed action.

IMPACT TOPICS

Impact topics are the resources of concern that could be affected by the range of alternatives, as outlined in the CEQ guidance for NEPA. These topics include resources in the natural, cultural, and community environment. The impact topics originally considered for the TUAI project include vegetation and wildlife; wetlands and floodplains; ecologically critical areas; rare, threatened, and endangered species; air quality; water quality; soils and geology; noise; socioeconomic characteristics; cultural, historic, and archaeological resources; hazardous materials; and visitor experience and park operations. Based on site-specific conditions, impact topics either were retained for detailed analysis or eliminated from further consideration.

Topics eliminated from detailed analysis in the Environmental Assessment (EA) include: unique natural resources; wild and scenic rivers; prime and unique agricultural lands; natural or depletable resources; public health and safety; land use plans; policies, or controls; and Indian sacred sites and Indian trust resources.

ALTERNATIVES

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative does not include the rehabilitation or preservation of the HCA at TUAI. The current visitor services include a temporary visitor center housed in a trailer, a single parking lot, a 30-seat auditorium, restrooms, and a small bookstore. Visitors are able to view the HCA from the hilltop; however, there is currently no access to the HCA. The site would remain in its current use as an NPS unit and no further development would occur.

Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative provides park visitors a strong “stepping back into time” experience to the war years with a focus on the flight training experience. The proposed improvements to the site would reflect the historic appearance of the site during the year 1945 and the park would provide visitor services compatible with the projected visitor load and composition. Visitation is expected to increase from the current 30,000 people per year to approximately 495,000 annual visitors within the initial five years, based on full build-out of the site, which includes the future TANC. Approximately 75 percent of visitors to the proposed facilities would include the future TANC in their visit.

The following features from Alternative C of the *Special Resource Study* are required by legislation to be included in the development of TUAI:

- Rehabilitate the cultural landscape, to include opportunities for exhibits and interpretation of the Tuskegee Airmen experience; rehabilitate the entrance gate and reconstruct the Guard Booth; provide pedestrian walks, parking, overlook with a Tuskegee Airmen memorial and Chief Anderson statue, and a picnic area.
- Preserve and rehabilitate Hangar Number One.
- Construct a new building on the site of Hangar Number Two.
- Rehabilitate the existing Control Tower, Skyway Club, Bath and Locker House, and the Warehouse/Vehicle Storage Building.
- Stabilize the existing Fire Protection Shed, Oil Storage Shed, and Dope Storage Shed.
- Provide “ghost” frameworks on the sites of the Flight Commander’s Office, Army Supply Building, Vehicle Maintenance Shed, and Physical Plant Building.

For the Preferred Alternative, the proposed ghost structures are the Guard Booth, Flight Commander’s Office, Army Supply Building, and Physical Plant Building. The Vehicle Maintenance Shed would not be constructed as a ghost structure, as there is insufficient information regarding its historic location and appearance.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

All lands within the current boundaries of the park are managed as a cultural resource. As such, the physical, cultural, and biological resources located within the park are maintained to reflect the attributes most associated with the historic significance of the site. The No Action Alternative would not involve restoration or rehabilitation of cultural resources at TUAI. Management and operations, as well as visitation to the site, would remain at current levels, and no impacts to natural resources from vegetation removal would occur. Under the No Action Alternative, historic resources would experience adverse impacts from further deterioration in the long-term. In addition, the Tuskegee region would not receive any of the socioeconomic benefits associated with the Preferred Alternative, such as an increase in employment, educational, recreational and other tourist-related opportunities.

Notable changes to the existing environment from the Preferred Alternative would include building restoration and rehabilitation, vegetation removal necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation of the park, and landscaping to reflect the landscape

during the period of significance. The potential impacts of the Preferred Alternative are described below.

Geology and Soils

Impacts to park geologic features are negligible and are not detectable based on standard scientific methodologies.

However, soils at the site would be affected by the implementation of the following components of the Preferred Alternative: removal of vegetation, construction of the new parking area, excavation of the pond, and stormwater management facilities. The potential for erosion and sedimentation into nearby stormwater culverts and waterways would be minimized through the use of sediment and erosion control measures as required by the *Alabama Handbook for Erosion Control, Sediment Control and Stormwater Management on Construction Sites and Urban Areas*, Volumes 1 and 2 (Alabama SWCC 2003). No impairment of park resources would result from either alternative.

Water Quality

The rehabilitation of the historic pond and some vegetation removal may occur within the 100-year floodplain. In addition to vegetation removal, which would increase stormwater runoff in the short-term until new plantings were re-established, an increase in impervious surface at the site would result in increased runoff. However, the impacts to surface water would be negligible as stormwater management systems would be installed and upgraded to control runoff, erosion, and sedimentation.

Potential erosion from the removal of vegetation at the site would be detectable but would be well below water quality standards or criteria and within historical or desired water quality conditions. Overall, the construction phase of this project is expected to create minor and temporary impacts. These impacts would be short-term in nature, lasting for the duration of construction activities. No impairment of park resources would result from either alternative.

Floodplains

Short-term, minor impacts to floodplains would be related to construction of the historic pond and plane tie down area, and vegetation removal for historic landscape rehabilitation. Long-term impacts of the vegetation removal would be negligible as the area would be re-vegetated

according to the landscape plan and the area would continue to function as a floodplain. The stormwater pond, designed to provide stormwater management, would provide long-term moderate benefits to floodplains by protecting the floodplain outside the pond from stormwater flow from the HCA. The stormwater pond would temporarily detain stormwater, preventing it from flooding adjacent areas in the floodplain already prone to flooding during storm events. Because no negative impacts to floodplains would result from either alternative, there would be no impairment of park resources.

Air Quality

Based on the air emissions results, the Preferred Alternative would have negligible impacts from additional emissions. There would be no impairment of park resources resulting from either alternative.

Vegetation

Impacts to the plant community include major adverse impacts from the extensive removal of woody vegetation and moderate beneficial effects from the management and removal of invasive species and restoration of native species. Invasive species would be removed or managed where possible, improving habitat for native species. Native species would be planted in place of invasive species to return the site to the level, open terrain of the site in the early 1940s. No removal of vegetation beyond what is required for historic resources would be performed. Forested buffers would remain along the unnamed tributary and around wetland areas. Vegetation removal at the site is necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the enabling legislation of the park and would not cause impairment of park resources.

Wildlife

The No Action Alternative would not impact wildlife. For the Preferred Alternative, forested vegetation removal on the site and increase in human activity at the site would cause permanent, minor impacts to wildlife as a result of habitat loss; however, these changes would be necessary to rehabilitate TUA to its period of significance and would not cause impairment to park resources. No impairment of park resources would result from either alternative.

Wetlands

The No Action or Preferred Alternative would not directly impact wetland areas. Potential indirect impacts to wetlands could occur from erosion during construction activities proposed for the Preferred Alternative. However, Best Management Practices would be required to protect adjacent wetlands from construction impacts during the implementation of the Preferred Alternative. The proposed construction of a stormwater management pond adjacent to Wetland 3 would result in treated stormwater entering the wetlands; however, this impact would be minimal. Because no negative impacts to wetlands would result from either alternative, there would be no impairment of park resources.

Ecologically Critical Areas

No impacts would occur to ecologically critical areas as a result of either alternative evaluated. Therefore, there would be no impairment of park resources.

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

No notable effects on Rare, Threatened, and Endangered (RTE) species from the Preferred Alternative are expected at TUA I. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has stated that three mussel species and the red-cockaded woodpecker are of concern for this site. The project area is within the historic range of the red-cockaded woodpecker, but the habitat it prefers would not be restored, rehabilitated, or removed as part of the Preferred Alternative. Through coordination with the USFWS, no further action is required by the NPS for red-cockaded woodpecker habitat at TUA I as part of this project. There would be no impairment of park resources from either alternative.

Socioeconomics (Demographics, Economy, Land Use, and Environmental Justice)

Unlike the Preferred Alternative, the No Action Alternative would not result in additional educational and recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors to Macon County. The No Action Alternative would not stimulate the creation of new jobs, new development, or local infrastructure improvements, and therefore would not provide any socioeconomic benefits to the region.

The Preferred Alternative would have major beneficial impacts on the region's socioeconomic resources. TUA I would provide an economic stimulus in Macon County that is much needed for

regional growth. The potential for adverse impacts, such as loss of surrounding rural and agricultural lands, would be outweighed by the major direct and indirect benefits possible with the proposed improvements, such as increases in employment, educational and recreational opportunities, and possible increases in residential and commercial development in the surrounding region. The Preferred Alternative would not result in disproportionate impacts to the region's low-income and minority communities. No impairment of park resources would result from either alternative.

Recreation

There would be no impact to recreation at TUIAI from the No Action Alternative. There would be no negative impacts to recreational resources at TUIAI from the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative would be a major beneficial impact to TUIAI's recreational resources, as there are limited recreational opportunities currently available at the site. No impairment of park resources would result from either alternative.

Aesthetics

Under the No Action Alternative, no alterations to the landscape would occur; therefore, there would be no impact to aesthetics. The Preferred Alternative would have moderate impacts on the scenic quality of TUIAI, as well as surrounding locations, because of the removal of overgrown, non-native vegetation. Beneficial visual impacts would result from rehabilitating the site to a more native, historic landscape and rehabilitating the remaining structures, thus enhancing the scenic qualities of the site. No impairment of park resources would result from either alternative.

Noise

No major effects on the soundscape from either alternative are expected at TUIAI. Implementation of the Preferred Alternative would produce minor and short-term noise impacts during the construction phase. In the long-term, minor noise impacts from additional visitor vehicular traffic would occur in the vicinity of TUIAI. However, no sensitive receptors are located in the vicinity of TUIAI. No impairment of park resources would result from either alternative.

Energy Requirements and Conservation

There would be no increases in energy or natural resource requirements for the No Action Alternative, considering that the HCA would remain closed to visitors and visitation would remain at current levels. No major increases in energy and natural resource requirements would occur for the Preferred Alternative. Park resources and values would not be degraded to provide energy for improvements at TUAJ. The energy requirements for the proposed new facilities would be kept to a minimum by utilizing energy-efficient systems and sustainable design to comply with applicable Executive Orders, including *Executive Order 13123: Greening the Government Through Effective Energy Management*, *Executive Order 13031: Federal Alternative Fueled Vehicle Leadership*, and *Executive Order 13149: Greening the Government Through Federal Fleet and Transportation Efficiency* (NPS 2001b). No impairment of park resources would result from either alternative.

Cultural, Historic, and Archaeological Resources

Under the No Action Alternative, the historic resources of TUAJ would be adversely affected. By leaving the structures and the landscape in their present conditions, demolition by neglect would occur to the resources over time. Under the Preferred Alternative, most of the effects to the resource would be considered beneficial. Of the two identified alternatives presented in this EA, rehabilitation of the HCA to its 1945 appearance to the greatest extent possible would be the least harmful to the resource. Rehabilitation would also enhance interpretation opportunities and preserve the site for future visitors. A summary of the individual impacts to each historic structure is included in Table ES-1.

Table ES-1: Summary of Effects on Cultural Resources by Alternatives

Resource	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative
Army Supply Building	No Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Bath & Locker House	Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Control Tower	Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Dope Storage Shed	Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Entrance Gate	Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Fire Protection Shed	Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Flight Commander's Office (Cadet Class & Waiting Room)	No Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Guard Booth	No Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Hangar Number One	Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect

Resource	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative
Hangar Number Two	No Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Oil Storage Shed	Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Physical Plant Warehouse	No Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Skyway Club	Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Vehicle Maintenance Shed	No Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Warehouse/Vehicle Storage Shed	Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Moton Field Cultural Landscape	Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect
Cumulative Effects	No Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect

Hazardous Materials

Past storage, use, waste disposal practices, and medical research activities at TUIAI were investigated through historic review, Level I Assessment, USACE UST investigation, Level III (Phase II) investigation, and further environmental sampling and UST investigation. All outstanding issues related to hazardous materials were resolved at TUIAI. Under the Preferred Alternative, there would be no further introduction of hazardous materials to the TUIAI site; therefore, there would be no impacts to park resources from hazardous materials. No impairment of park resources would result from either alternative.

Visitor Experience and Park Operations

The Preferred Alternative would have major beneficial impacts on visitor experience. The visitor experience would be a formal interpretation format and would be greatly enhanced from today's experience. Visitors would be able to walk around the HCA and enter certain buildings designated for interpretive or museum use. In addition to the interpretative functions, the Visitor Services Area would include parking, public restrooms, food service areas, picnic grounds, walking trails, and a scenic overlook of the HCA to include some commemorative features, such as a "Chief Anderson" statue and a "Tuskegee Airmen Memorial."

The Preferred Alternative would also have major impacts on park operations with an increase in the park's maintenance, curatorial, and administrative obligations. No impairment of park resources would result from either alternative.

SUMMARY

The deterioration of the cultural resources at TUIAI has led to legislation mandating the restoration and rehabilitation of important historic features that represent a significant event in African-American history. This Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment describes proposed actions to commemorate the Tuskegee Airmen for their contribution to World War II. Overall, the Preferred Alternative would result in the preservation of valuable cultural resources and would improve the recreational, educational, and employment opportunities in the Tuskegee region. The proposed improvements to TUIAI would provide an ideal setting for the interpretation of important historic events, and would not only create a unique tourist destination for the citizens of Alabama, but would become a tourist attraction for everyone interested in the Tuskegee Airmen's significant role in World War II history.

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